

WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD COLLABORATIVE PROCESS?

Query: Think of a project with which you have been involved that was GOOD e.g. all members of the group felt they contributed to an outcome with which all members were satisfied. What were some of the characteristics of this project? Below are some ideas that have surfaced after many years of working with groups seeking to work more collaboratively with each other or others:

Some characteristics we have seen that lead to success

- Members used good communication techniques:
 - The group was **clear about its task and goals**
 - People used “I” messages
 - People asked questions that **encouraged people to talk**, not get defensive
 - People **listened** to what others were saying, rather than planning what they were going to say, talking to someone else or reading the paper
 - People **showed empathy** for others feelings; they didn’t roll their eyes or make “the big sigh”!
 - People **summarized or paraphrased** others to make certain they understood what was being meant
 - Members **did not engage in gossip** outside of their work together
- People **concentrated on interests, not positions**
They focused on why something was important to them, not just what.
- People recognized and tolerated that different **group members processed information** in a different way—some quickly, some orally, some after seeing something written or presented, some after having time to reflect.
- **Assignments** were **jointly developed** and assigned and individuals **followed through** with those assignments on a timely basis.
- **Meetings were facilitated** by someone that everyone trusted to get through the agenda in a fair and even handed manner—sometimes this was a neutral person outside of the group itself.
- A **supportive, respectful atmosphere** was developed that led members to trust each other.
How can this be done?
 - Begin looking at shared values and interests.
 - Find or create some event that allows people to view each other as people, not just representatives of their group (e.g. field trip to look at..., interactive training or workshop, group potluck or BBQ, etc.)
 - Be aware that body language MAKES A DIFFERENCE!
 - LISTEN, and let people know you have heard them.
- The group agreed to a **process for decision making and resolving disputes** early in their collaborative process.